

15 April 1963

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS
ON
THE ENCYCLICAL "PACEM IN TERRIS"

- I. The encyclical is essentially a restatement of basic moral principles on man, society, and government, and an application of these to present-day technological, economic, and political conditions.
 - A. While providing fresh evidence of John XXIII's liberal tendencies, the encyclical contains no doctrinal changes or innovations, no indication of change in basic Vatican policies, no real "opening" either to the extreme left or to the reactionary right.
- II. Perhaps the closest thing to a policy change--and that hardly a real one--is the section which notes that "historical movements" (a reference to Communism?) which have originated from "false philosophical teaching regarding the nature, origin and destiny of the universe and man" (Marxism-Leninism?) "cannot avoid...being subject to changes, even of a profound nature,"

and "it can happen, then, that a drawing nearer together or a meeting for the attainment of some practical end, which was formerly deemed inopportune and unproductive, might now or in the future be considered opportune and useful...."

- A. While this is expression of an almost self-evident fact, the inclusion here may stem from a Papal hope, aroused perhaps by a temporary softening of Moscow's attitude toward the Vatican, that the plight of the Church in Communist countries may be eased.
- B. Whether this portends a meeting between the Pope and Khrushchev, or some other Soviet-Vatican meeting or exchange, is not known.
 - 1. But there is no reason to doubt that John, if he felt that good would result from such meeting or exchange, would brush aside criticism thereof (even from within the Roman Curia), just as Christ dismissed criticism of His talking with Publicans and sinners.
 - 2. Such a meeting or exchange would not constitute "softening" of Catholicism on Communism.

NOTE: Other references in Part V of the encyclical to distinguishing between errors and the erring and the possibility that "meetings

and agreements...between believers and those who do not believe or believe insufficiently...can be occasions for discovering truth and paying homage to it" would seem to refer primarily to the "separated brethern" (Orthodox; Protestants) and perhaps those of other religions.

III. Another section of the encyclical drawing major attention has been that on worldwide authority and the United Nations.

A. The Pope notes that today "no political community is able to pursue its own interests and develop itself in isolation," and moreover "the universal common good poses problems of worldwide dimension, which cannot be adequately tackled or solved except by the efforts...of public authorities which are in a position to operate in an effective manner on a worldwide basis."

1. A public authority with worldwide power, however, "must be set up by common accord and not imposed by force."
2. Also, the "public authority of the world community is not intended to limit the sphere of action of the public authority

of the individual political community,
much less to take its place."

3. The Pope expresses an "earnest wish that the United Nations Organization--in its structure and in its means--may become ever more equal to the magnitude and nobility of its tasks...."

B. This part of the encyclical--for which U Thant promptly expressed appreciation--may in time prove of considerable significance in mobilizing support for the UN, especially in Christian countries.

1. While this influence may not be immediately felt, many Catholics of all political views may now feel assured that they need have no problems of conscience (if they have had such) working with others of divergent and even clashing political views who are willing to cooperate under UN auspices and machinery in action toward common human goals.

IV. The full social and political impact of Pacem in Terris--as opposed to the initial outpourings of praise from many and diverse quarters--will be evidence only with the passage of years.

- A. The great social encyclicals of the past (e.g., the Rerum Novarum of Leo XIII and the Quadragesimo Anno of Pius XI) had a tremendous impact in the way of social and economic change; but even in Catholic countries it took considerable time for these changes to develop on a wide basis.
- B. Nonetheless, the impact potential of the present encyclical is enhanced by
 - 1. the present world prestige of the Vatican and widespread goodwill engendered by the Ecumenical Council which was convened last fall and is to resume this September;
 - 2. the addressing of the encyclical to "all men of good-will" plus the fact that most of the argumentation and discussion is based on the natural law and natural theology (rather than on revealed truth and purely Catholic doctrine).

- C. The most immediate significant world reactions may be to the sections on disarmament, nuclear testing, racism, independence move, the UN, and world authority.
- V. Soviet bloc commentators, for example, were quick to hail the encyclical and its references to the desirability of ^{peace,} disarmament, negotiations, and have [^] tried to promote the impression that Western governments, the US in particular, are out of step with Papal views.
 - A. Izvestia on 12 April claimed the encyclical had plunged Washington into "smoldering discontent," and said the "dissatisfaction" in Washington stemmed from US disapproval of the Pope's "peacemaking" activity.
 - B. In typical fashion, however, the Communists ignored the conditions and prerequisites for peace and disarmament cited by the Pope.
 - C. Also ignored by the Communists was the encyclical's emphasis on man's right "to freedom in searching for truth and in expressing and communicating his opinions," his right "to honor Good according to the dictates of an upright conscience and...to

worship God privately and publicly," the right
"to private property, even of productive goods,"
etc.

D. Moscow and the rest also ignore the encyclical¹²
affirmations that "people invested with legitimate
authority...derive their authority from God...";
that those "who have authority in the state
oblige men in conscience only if their authority
is intrinsically related with the authority of
God and shares in it"; that "if any government
does not acknowledge the rights of man or violates
them, it not only fails its duty, but its orders
completely lack juridical force."

1. While these statements are nothing more than
reiteration of standard positions, they
should help allay any latent suspicions on
either side of the Iron Curtain that John
is ready to compromise principle in seeking
to ease tension with the Bloc.

VI. In the Afro-Asian world, the encyclical has not evoked a strong reaction in the largely non-Christian capitals.

- A. The Pope's appeals against colonialism and racialism and for a ban on nuclear weapons should find support among Afro-Asian circles, however, and many leaders may give most vocal attention to these during UN discussions of the problems of colonialism and nuclear armament.
- B. The Afro-Asians will welcome papal support for the UN in the hope that organization will become even more useful as a forum for the neutralists and in particular for pressing the attack against colonialism and atomic testing.

- 1. In particular, they may see the following as the most significant sentence for them in the encyclical:
"It is nevertheless indispensable that in the interests of the common good they [the powerful states], as all others, should respect the rights of those smaller states to political

freedom, to economic development and to the adequate protection, in the case of conflicts between nations, of that neutrality which is theirs according to the natural as well as international, law.

VII. Publication of the encyclical will have little immediate impact on the politics of the Western World; initially at least it will likely by and large be seized upon by those elements in the Church who see in it support for their own views, and circumvented or ignored by those who differ with its tone and purpose.

- A. In Spain, for example, the Basque priests will find comfort in assertions about the "right of assembly and association", and the recognition of a people's national dignity and distinctiveness; at the same time the more conservative upper echelons of the Spanish hierarchy will find it sufficiently flexible to "justify" their continuing on a business as usual basis.
- B. Similarly the document will stimulate progressive Catholic circles in Costa Rica

and Chile; elsewhere in Latin America and particularly where Church and landed establishment are complementary, it will be minimized.

- C. For a variety of parochial reasons the encyclical may have more domestic political effect in Italy than elsewhere--although we do not believe it will influence the upcoming national elections one way or another. Its effects are likely to be more subtle and less immediate; whatever else it does, publication of the encyclical confirms the strongly liberal trend in the modern Church's orientation. If there is a theory of foreign policy in the piece it is one better suited to a Fanfani than to a Scelba or a Segni. This aspect will not be lost on the professional politicians of the Christian Democratic party, who are likely to react in characteristically pragmatic ways--for example by slightly discounting the hitherto powerful Cardinal Ottaviani and lay leader Luigi Gedda. In sum, the encyclical will serve as additional proof--if such proof is needed--

that static or aggressively reactionary elements within the Church will receive little or no official encouragement from the present Pope,

D. In a similarly indirect way publication of the encyclical could over the long run influence the evolution of political parties in Europe because of its strong emphasis on the social responsibilities of the State.

1. Within the Catholic parties it could in time strengthen the liberal wings as opposed to the Conservatives, as for example in Belgium.
2. Among the Socialist parties there are already tendencies at work, particularly in ^{the} German Social Democratic Party, to abandon Marxist traditions and to tone down the previously belligerent anticlericalism. Also, the militancy of Catholic trade unions in France in comparison to their Socialist counterparts has already become an embarrassment to the Socialists.

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